

State Emergency Coordination Center (SECC)

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Situation Report for August 24, 2007

(issued @ 1500 hrs.)



2007 FIRES

Report Includes:

- Background Information
 - Fire Restrictions & Closures
 - Air Quality
 - Road Closures/Travel Restrictions
- Current Incident Situation
- New Large Fires
- Weather
- State Declarations
- Local & Tribal Declarations
- Local Government & Tribal Emergency Operations
- Requests for State Financial Assistance
- Fire Management Assistance Grants
- EMAC Resources Committed
- Summary of State Resources Committed

Important Websites:

State of Montana Fire Information:

<http://mt.gov/fire.asp>

National Interagency Fire Center

http://www.nifc.gov/fire_info/nfn.htm

Northern Rockies Coordination Center

<http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/>

Inciweb -- Incident Information System

<http://www.inciweb.org/state/27/>

Being prepared: Ready.gov

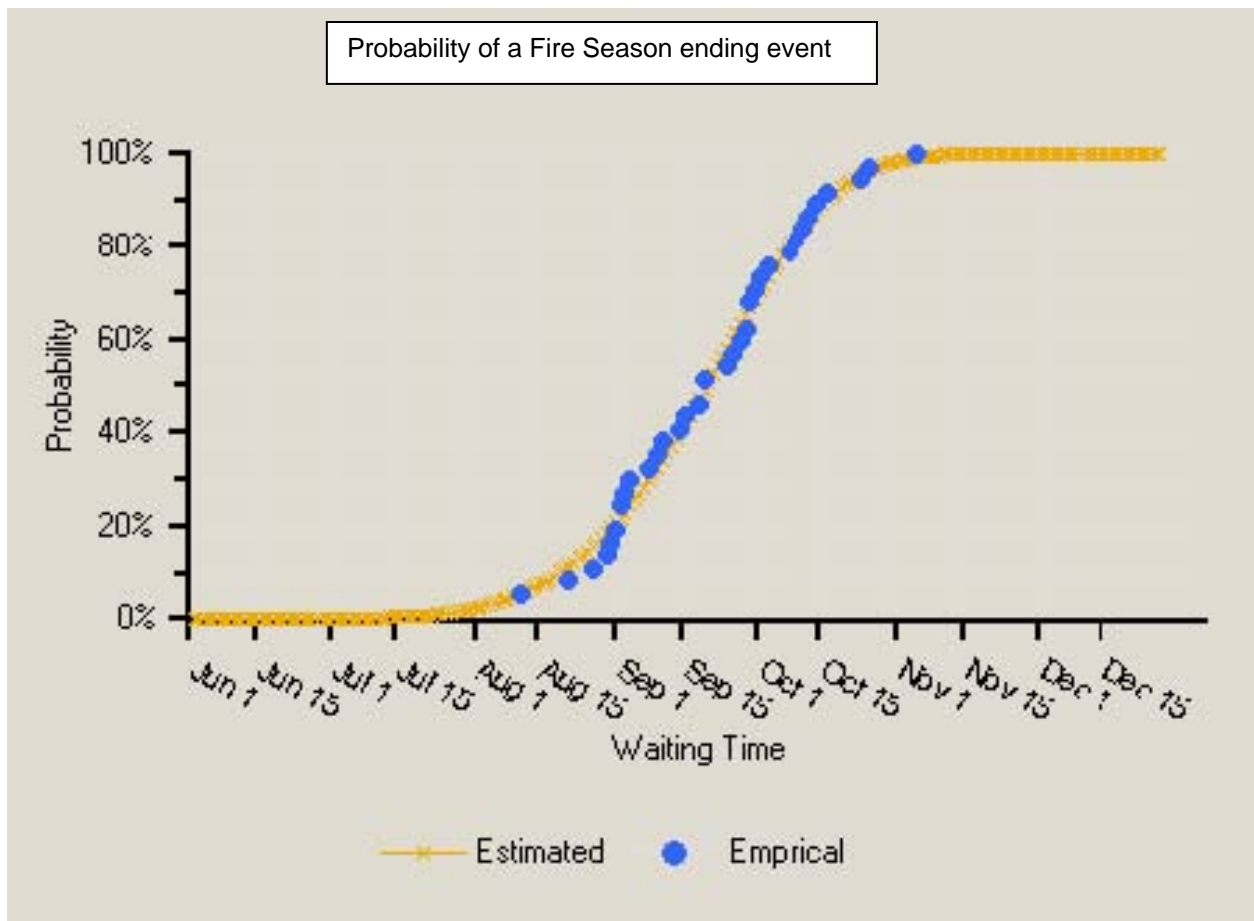
I. Background Information

Since June, hot and dry weather has dominated the region creating very high to extreme fire conditions. Fire Indices are at an all time high while fuel moistures are low. Accompanying the high indices are weather patterns that have set the conditions for lightning and lightning caused starts. High pressure weather patterns over the region are responsible for the high temperatures and little to no moisture. Occasional cold fronts push through the region causing severe lightning storms that ignite wildfires. Rain has accompanied some of these fronts but a return to a high pressure system tends to mitigate most of the moisture received.

Long Range Predictions

Above normal significant fire potential is forecast for most of the Area during August. Fuel moisture conditions should improve during the September through November time period except for eastern Montana. In many areas across western Montana and northern Idaho, downed dead woody fuel moistures are drier than normal and Energy Release Component indices are running near or above record levels and well ahead of normal for this time of year. The Climate Prediction Center's forecast calls for above normal temperatures and

below normal precipitation during August, especially over western portions of the Area. Wind events are likely to increase during August as well. Abundant fine fuels are rapidly curing in eastern Montana and will likely increase the probability for large fire problems during August and into the fall months.



This graph shows that on August 22, there was statistically about a 12% chance of a season ending event. A season ending event is defined as a 1 inch of rainfall occurring in 5 days or less. The probability curve does start rising very quickly between September 1 and October 15th. This was conducted for Powell area, just west of Lolo Pass, by Powell RD FMO Mark Wilson and LTAN/FBAN Walker Thornton.

Fire Contracting: Inquiries regarding contracting fire equipment and other fire resources should be directed to the interested party's local dispatch center or Geographic Area Coordination Center see:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/fire/nrcq/agree-contract/signup.html>

Fire Restrictions & Closures: Portions of the state are currently under Stage I or Stage II Fire Restrictions. For definitions of these restrictions, see:

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/stagel.pdf>

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/stagell.pdf>

Fire Restrictions in Effect (for specific areas):

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/index.html>

Air Quality & Smoke: The Montana Department of Environmental Quality issues a daily forecast and discussion of potential smoke impacts throughout the state. The forecast can be accessed at <http://www.deq.state.mt.us/fireupdates/index.asp>.

Road Closures & Travel Restrictions: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/reports/alerts.shtml>

Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) Emergency Rules:

<http://sos.mt.gov/ARM/emergency/index.asp>

Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks

[Current Fire Restrictions](#)

[Drought & Fire Updates](#)

[Drought & Fire News](#)

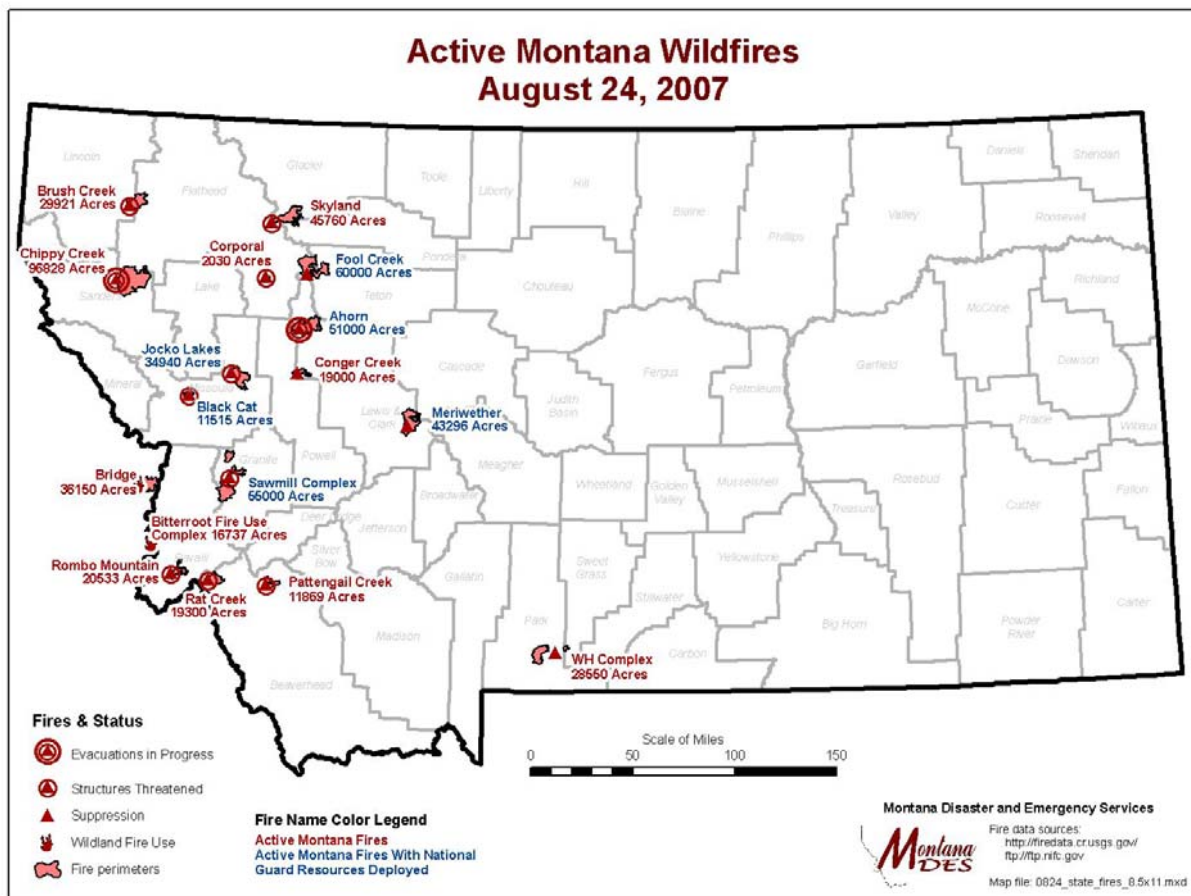
Department of Revenue

<http://mt.gov/revenue/forindividuals/taxrelieffordisaster.asp>

Department of Agriculture

<http://agr.mt.gov/crops/hayFirst.asp>

II. Current Incident Situation - Incidents listed according to current NRCG priority.
(This report includes summary information for Montana fires that are currently greater than 100 acres in size. Fires are being dropped from this report once they reach 100% containment.) We have included a link to fire perimeters for the several of the incidents:
http://dma.mt.gov/des/Fire_Perimeter_Maps.asp.



Currently assigned to Montana incidents are:

Area Command Teams	-	1
Type 1 IMT's	-	5
Type 2 IMT's	-	3
Fire Use Management Teams	-	3

The Area Command Team (Zimmerman) that had been assigned to Northern Rockies Coordination Center (Missoula) is now reassigned to help with incident prioritization and resources allocation for fires in Southwestern Montana. **¹ All of these fires are included in the SW Montana Area Command.**

Black Cat ¹ is located between Highway 93 and Mill Creek, approximately 2 miles SW of Evaro, Montana. Martin's Type 1 IMT is assigned (under Unified Command with Frenchtown FD). Current size is 11,515 acres with 40% containment. Approximately 650 personnel are assigned, plus mutual aid resources from local fire departments. A total of seven (7)

unoccupied structures were lost, but at this time, no primary residences have been reported as destroyed. **There will also be a community meeting Friday at 7:30 p.m. at the Arlee High School. Fire officials will attend these meetings and give a fire update as well as answer questions. All lanes of Highway 93 are to be re-opened today with speed restrictions.**

Jocko Lakes ¹ started on CSKT lands (Flathead Agency, BIA), twenty-six miles NE of Missoula; 8 miles W of Seeley Lake. Hoff's Type 1 IMT is assigned. The Jocko Lakes Fire is 34,940 acres and 37% contained. Personnel assigned: 1,043. Community of Seeley Lake, surrounding area, Pyramid Lumber Mill and cell tower are threatened. Structures (8) have been lost to include 1 primary residence and 7 outbuildings. **The next Community meeting will be held Friday night at the Seeley Lake School at 8 P.M.**

Chippy Creek is located forty-two miles southwest of Kalispell, and 24 miles N of Thompson Falls, MT (Northwestern Land Office, Montana DNRC). Bennett's Type 1 IMT is assigned. Size is 96,828 acres with 40% containment. Personnel assigned: 629. Numerous homes remain threatened. Evacuations and Area Closures remain in effect.

Sawmill Complex ¹ (4 fires) is located on the Lolo, Bitterroot and Beaverhead – Deerlodge National Forests. The four fires in this complex extend from approximately 22 miles SE of Missoula to an area approximately 23 miles WSW of Phillipsburg, MT. The complex acreage is 55,000 and includes the Sawmill Creek, Wyman #2, Fisher Point, and the Signal Rock 07 fires. Containment is 10%. McNitt's Type 2 IMT is assigned. Personnel assigned: 604. Numerous residences and other structures remain threatened. Use Restrictions and Road Closures are in effect within the Rock Creek drainage. **A community meeting is scheduled for 7:30 pm Sunday, August 26.**

Skyland is located on the Flathead NF near Summit. Heintz's Type 2 IMT is assigned. The Skyland Fire is 45,760 acres with 67% containment. Personnel assigned: 462. Two structures are confirmed lost, numerous residences remain threatened. Evacuations for all areas have been reduced to Level 1.

Rombo Mountain ¹ is located in the Bitterroot NF. The fire is located eighteen miles south of Darby, MT. Quisenberry's Type 1 IMT is assigned. Estimated size is 20,533 acres with 0% containment. Personnel assigned: 145. Residences, Painted Rocks State Park and other commercial property remain threatened. Cooler temperatures, reduced winds and higher relative humidity resulted in significantly reduced fire behavior. All existing Stage I Pre-Evacuation Notices/Alerts remain in effect. Also, the existing area closure order remains in effect. Maps and area closure descriptions are available at Forest offices, and on line at www.fs.fed.us/r1/bitterroot. **Residents can get up-to-date information about closures and evacuations by calling the Ravalli County Evacuation Hotline at 375-6650.**

WH Complex – These fires are located 27 miles S of Livingston, and 10 miles SE of Emigrant, MT. Total size of the complex is 28,550 acres with 60% containment Stanich's Type 1 IMT is assigned and transitioning with Bonefeld's FUMT. Personnel Assigned: 449. Area closures are in effect.

Ahorn Fire on the Lewis and Clark National Forest in Lewis and Clark County is being managed by Lineback's FUMT. (They are also managing the Ahorn Fire). Current size is estimated at 51,000 acres and is 10% contained. Personnel Assigned: 190. Structure protection for residences and guest ranches in the Benchmark, Gibson, and Sun River Canyon areas continue. **There will be a public meeting on Saturday, August 25th at 1:00 p.m. at the Augusta School.**

Brush Creek is located on the Flathead NF, twenty-five miles west of Whitefish, MT. Brush Creek is 29,921 acres with 90% containment. Estimated containment date is today. Hill's Type 2 IMT is assigned. Personnel assigned: 517. Residences and outbuildings remain threatened. **Community Meeting: Friday August 24th, 7:00 PM at the Incident Command Post located 3.3 miles south of US Highway 93 on Farm To Market Road.**

Rat Creek ¹ is located on the Beaverhead/Deerlodge NF, twenty-five miles west of Wisdom, MT. Quisenberry's Type 1 IMT (also managing the Rombo Mtn Fire) is assigned. The fire is now 19,300 acres and is 15% contained. Personnel assigned: 221. Structures are threatened. Park buildings, infrastructure, and cultural resources in the Big Hole National Battlefield are threatened.

Fool Creek on the Lewis and Clark and Flathead National Forests, approximately 30 miles NW of Choteau. Fire is now 60,000 acres with 15% containment. Personnel assigned: 130. Lineback's FUMT is assigned and is also managing the Ahorn Fire. Several outbuildings, including a ski resort remain threaten (7 outbuildings have burned). **A public meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. Friday at the Stage Stop Inn in Choteau.**

Bitterroot Fire Use Complex ¹ (12 fires) is 15 air miles west of Darby. Perkins's FUMT is assigned. The Bitterroot Fire Use Complex is 16,737 acres. Personnel assigned: 49. Cause: Lightning. Structures are threatened. One structure was destroyed.

Pattengail Creek ¹ on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF, 10 miles NE of Wisdom. The Pattengail Creek Fire is 11,869 acres and 15% contained. Quisenberry's Type 1 IMT (also managing the Rombo Mountain and Rat Creek Fire) is assigned; with 56 personnel. 12 structures along Highway 43 (west side of the fire in the area of Doolittle Creek and Squaw Creek) are threatened.

Conger Creek ¹ on the Lolo National Forest, approximately 20 miles north of Ovando. The fire is now 19,000 acres with 0% containment. Ahshapanek (Type 3 IC) is assigned with 18 personnel. 13 outbuildings are threatened.

Meriwether located on the Helena National Forest in and around the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness. Carpenter's Type 3 organization is assigned. Current size is estimated at 43,296 acres with 75% containment. Personnel Assigned: 78. A communication site remains threatened.

Calbick is located on the Flathead National Forest, approximately 20 miles South of East Glacier, MT. A Type 4 organization (Flint) is assigned. Personnel assigned: 11. Cause: Lightning. The Fire is approximately 862 acres in size, with 0 % containment. No structures are currently threatened, but structure protection measures are continuing in the Schafer Meadows area.

Corporal is 18 miles east of Swan Lake on the Flathead NF. The Corporal Fire is 2,030 acres and 0% contained. A Type 3 IC is assigned. Personnel assigned: 14. Cause: Lightning. Structures at Spotted Bear are threatened.

BH* is 36 miles southwest of Darby. Perkin's FUMT is managing the BH Fire. The BH Fire is 653 acres. Personnel assigned: Not reported. Cause: Lightning. Intermittent road closures are in place to fall snags.

Railley Mountain on the Flathead NF is 15 miles northeast of Seeley Lake. A previously reported confine/contain incident. Kamrud is assigned as the FUM1. The Railley Mountain Fire is 15,641 acres and 0% contained. No structures are threatened. Personnel assigned:

6. Cause: Lightning.

Boyce is 25 miles northeast of Denton. The Boyce Fire is a DNRC assist to Fergus County. A Type 4 IC is assigned. The Boyce Fire is 400 acres and 100% contained. Personnel assigned: 9. Cause: Lightning.

Last Day is 35 miles north of Winnett on the Charles M. Russell Wildlife Refuge. A Type 4 IC is assigned. The Last Day Fire is 493 acres and is 100% contained. Personnel assigned: 17. Cause: Lightning.

Ford Road is in the Lockwood area in Yellowstone County. The Ford Fire is a DNRC assist to Yellowstone County. Chief Bill Rash is the Incident Commander with a Type 3 Team. The Ford Fire is estimated to be 804 acres with 100% contained. Personnel assigned: 75. 3 primary structures and several out buildings and vehicles were destroyed.

*** NEW FIRES (Emerging Extended Attack Fires over 100 acres in size)**

III. Weather

Red Flag Warnings and/or Fire Weather Watches:

Today the National Weather Service has not issued a Fire Weather Watch or Red Flag Warning for Montana.

Definitions of a Fire Weather Watch and a Red Flag Warning:

A fire weather watch or red flag warning is issued when the combination of dry fuels and weather conditions support extreme fire danger. These products are written for land and fire managers to highlight the increased fire danger.

A fire weather watch is issued up to 72 hours before the above conditions are expected to occur.

A red flag warning is issued when the conditions above are occurring or expected to occur within the next 24 hours. <http://www.weather.gov/>

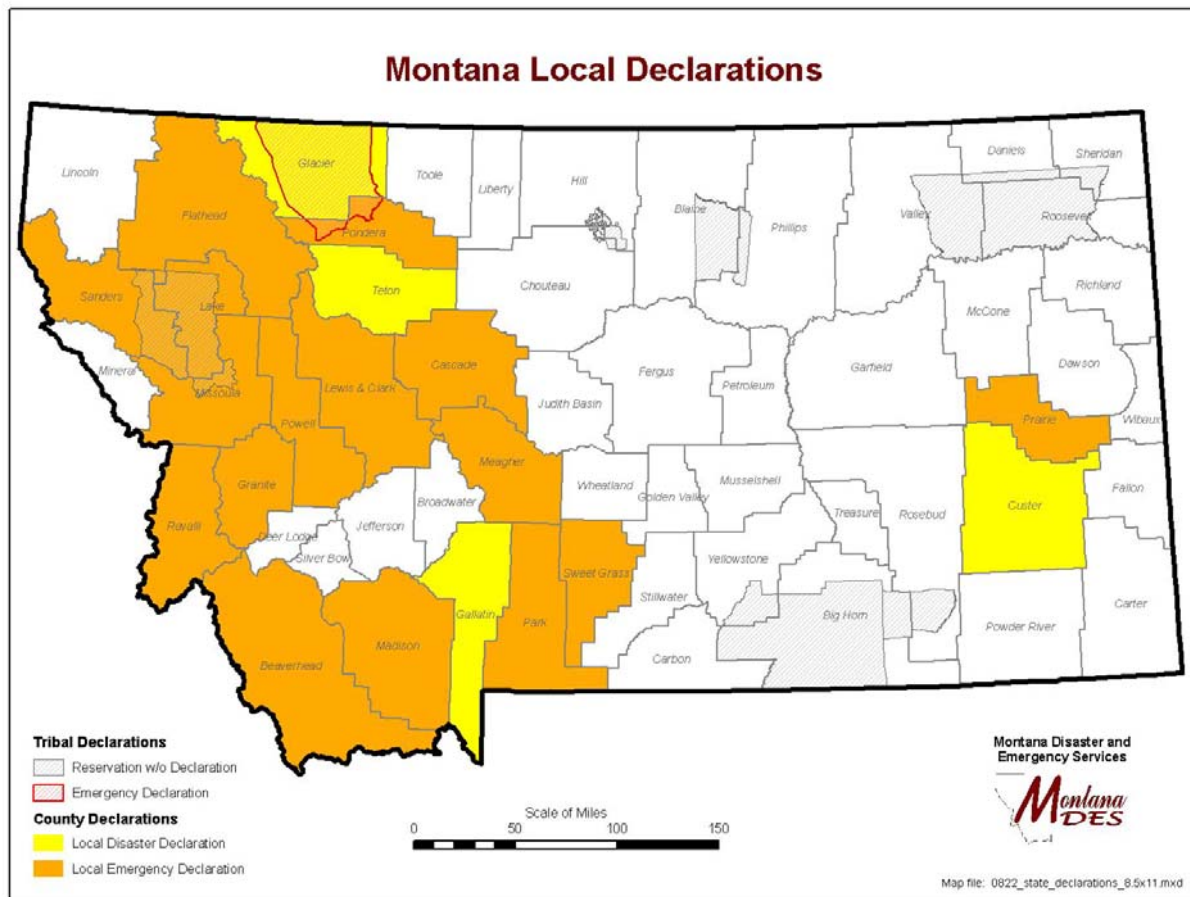
Weather Forecast For current Fire Weather Predictions, see the Daily Outlook at: http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/predictive/outlooks/daily_outlook.pdf

Fire Behavior Forecast For current Fire Behavior Predictions, see: http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/predictive/outlooks/fire_behavior/fire_behavior.pdf

IV. State Declarations

- Statewide Declaration of a Wildland Fire Emergency

V. Local and Tribal Declarations



- **State of Emergency.** The following jurisdictions have declared a state of emergency:

Lewis and Clark
Lake
Cascade
Flathead
Prairie
Pondera
Sweet Grass
Madison
Powell

Ravalli
Granite
Missoula
Sanders
Beaverhead
Blackfeet Nation
Park
Meagher

- **Disaster Declaration.** The following jurisdictions have declared a wildfire disaster:

Teton
Glacier

Gallatin
Custer

VI. Jurisdictional Emergency Operations

- The Lewis and Clark County Emergency Operation Center was activated on July 19, 2007.
- The Flathead County Emergency Operations Center was activated on August 2, 2007.
- The Teton County Emergency Operations Center was activated on August 2, 2007.
- The Missoula County Emergency Operations Center is activated. Missoula County has a call center in place for public information. The phone number is 406-258-3680.
- The Granite County Emergency Operations Center has been activated.
- The Sanders County Emergency Operations Center is activated but mobile in the area of the Chippy Creek Fire.
- The Sweet Grass County Emergency Operations Center was activated on 8/12/07.
- The Powder River County Emergency Operations Center was activated on 8/14/07.
- The Yellowstone County Emergency Operations Center was activated on 8/19/07.

VII. Requests for State Financial Assistance

- N/A

VIII. Fire Management Assistance Grants

- Jocko Lakes FEMA-2718FM-MT approved 8/4/07
- Black Cat FEMA-2721FM-MT approved 8/16/07
- Ford Road FEMA-2723FM-MT approved 8/19/07

IX. Emergency Management Assistance Compact Resources Committed

- EMAC A-Team is assigned to the MT State Emergency Coordination Center.
- Two HEMTT aviation refuelers from Colorado National Guard are deployed to support the Montana Army National Guard.

X. Summary of State Resources Committed (through the SECC)

- MT-DES currently has two employees deployed with Incident Management Teams (through the Northern Rockies Coordination Center).
- Montana Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk modules have been deployed for initial attack to:
 - Kalispell
 - Missoula
 - Helena

- One Montana Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook and module has been deployed to assist with fire support on the Meriwether Fire.
- Montana National Guard Security Teams have been assigned to:
 - Meriwether Fire
 - Sawmill Complex
 - Jocko Lake (2 teams)
 - Fool Creek Fire
 - Black Cat Fire (2 teams)
- Montana Highway Patrol resources are assigned (as requested) to assist in traffic control and law enforcement support of large fires.
- Starting on July 20, 2007, at 0700 the SECC was staffed and activated to a Level III status with extended hours (0700-1900), seven days a week. The SECC remains at Level III. Outside of those hours, the MT DES staff Duty Officer is available 24 hrs and may be reached at (406) 841-3911.